

Anti-Colonialism, Terrorism and the 'Politics of Friendship': Virendranath Chattopadhyaya and the European Anarchist Movement, 1910-1927

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ABSTRACT

This article traces the life and activities of the Indian anti-colonial nationalist Virendranath 'Chatto' Chattopadhyaya in the European anarchist movement from 1910 to 1927. While Chatto is better known for his role as secretary for the Comintern-led League Against Imperialism (1927-1933), this article argues that his peripatetic movements in European revolutionary networks during the early decades of the twentieth century suggests a much closer attraction to the ideas and practices of anarchism – including insurrectionist terrorism – than often acknowledged. Drawing on Leela Gandhi's insight into the revolutionary practices of the 'politics of friendship', it opens a window onto the cross-fertilised world of anti-colonial and anarchist internationalism in the early twentieth century.

Keywords: Anarchism, anti-colonialism, nationalism, terrorism, First World War, Chattopadhyaya

The Indian anti-colonial nationalist Virendranath 'Chatto' Chattopadhyaya is perhaps best known for his work as secretary for the Comintern-led League Against Imperialism (LAI), where he worked closely with Willi Münzenberg from 1927 until 1931.¹ However, by the time Chatto co-founded the LAI in 1927, he had travelled in anti-colonial nationalist and radical socialist circles in Europe for almost two decades. During that period, despite becoming a committed Bolshevik by the mid-1920s, he associated with well-known European anarchists such as

Jean Grave, Jeanne Morand, Luigi Bertoni, Panait Mușoiu, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Rudolf Rocker, and Armando Borghi had become an experienced anti-colonial nationalist revolutionary. That said, Chatto probably only briefly fully embraced anarchism in early 1920s Berlin, and his relation to anarchism remains mostly by association. However, as Carl Levy reminds us, ‘it is also worth bearing in mind that one did not have to be a signed-up member of an anarchist group to be affected by its influence’.² With that in mind, and drawing on Leela Gandhi’s persuasive claim that such forms of radical internationalism mutated into a ‘series of countercultural revolutionary practices’, which she calls the ‘politics of friendship’, I argue that his movements among European anarchists suggest a much closer affiliation between the politics of Indian national liberation and the revolutionary promise of anarchist freedom than often acknowledged by historians.³ While the links between the Indian nationalists in the Ghadr Party and anarchists in the United States have recently been explored to some extent, focusing particularly on Lala Har Dayal, Chatto’s friendships with European anarchists illuminates different intellectual and methodological affinities than those examined around the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and labour struggles in the United States.⁴ To take this further, I suggest that, despite intellectual and ideological divisions between anarchists and socialists of various kinds, the anti-colonial struggles of Chatto and other Indians often cut across such lines in the pursuit of national liberation. During this ‘age of entanglement’, to borrow from Kris Manjapra, Chatto’s friendships and political activities staked out different paths towards Indian independence than most of his contemporaries.⁵ In many ways, compared to M.N. Roy, who towed the Comintern line and fully embraced Bolshevism (until he was expelled in November 1929), and M.P.T. Acharya, the unique Indian anarchist, who joined the International Working Men’s Association (IWMA) and charted a three-decade career in the international anarchist movement, Chatto bridged those worlds as he negotiated the relationship between anarchism and the Indian national liberation struggle through the politics of friendship.⁶ Focusing on three case studies: first, Chatto’s associations with French anarchists (1910-1913); second, his involvement with Swiss-based Italian anarchists during the First World War and, third, his friendship with Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman in post-Russian Revolution Berlin (1921-1927), this article opens a window onto the cross-fertilised world of anti-colonial and anarchist internationalism in the early twentieth century. Through such forms of friendship, it speaks to those convergences where the radical politics of anti-colonial nationalism was directed towards ‘imaginary futures’, and not necessarily oriented around the nation-state.⁷

Chatto's movements across Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century has made it difficult for historians to document his biographical itinerary. Perhaps most disappointingly, the sole biography of Chatto to date, Nirode Barooah's *Chatto* (2004), only briefly mentions his associations with Bertoni, Berkman, Goldman and Borghi, but argues that 'until he joined the LAI, he remained primarily an Indian anti-imperialist'.⁸ While this may be true, Barooah also seems to infer that anti-imperialism and anarchism were mutually exclusive political projects. Furthermore, in this case, such oversights might be down to the fact that it is really only from the later phase of the First World War and into the era of the Russian Revolution and beyond that Chatto has left any substantial personal records.⁹ Therefore, taking on board Edward Said's notion of a 'contrapuntal' analysis to read between dominant narratives, in this article I rely primarily on testimonies, recollections and accounts from his friends, partners and enemies, read alongside primary sources from archives across Britain, France, Switzerland, and Sweden, to trace his activities among anarchists from 1910 to 1927.¹⁰

'INDIAN ANARCHISM' IN LONDON AND PARIS, 1908-1913

Born on 31 October 1880 in Hyderabad, India, and younger brother of famous poet Sarojini Naidu, Chatto arrived in Britain in 1903 to compete for the Indian Civil Service exams and hoped to enter India's ranks of metropolitan trained lawyers. Enrolled as a law student at Middle Temple he was not politically active, but by 1908 he had become involved with the revolutionary nationalists at India House, a north London hostel for Indian students. Described by pro-Empire journalist and editor of the *Times* newspaper Valentine Chirol as 'the most dangerous organization outside of India', India House was a hub for revolutionary anti-colonial activity until former resident Madan Lal Dhingra assassinated political assistant Sir William Curzon Wyllie in London on 1 July 1909.¹¹ In the months before the murder, Chatto had been involved in a public dispute in the *Times* with Shyamaji Krishnavarma – founder-editor of *The Indian Sociologist* and proprietor of India House – over the radical direction of the Indians in Europe.¹² However, after first disavowing terrorism and assassination, he changed his mind and allied himself with the militant wing of the Indian nationalists in Britain after the Curzon Wyllie murder. 'The catalogue of coming assassinations will probably be a long one', he wrote in the *Times*, 'and the responsibility for its length will have to be laid at the door of those who, instead of espousing the cause of Indian freedom, wish to hold India in the

interests of Britain'. The statement led to his expulsion from Middle Temple on 29 July 1909.¹³ After Vinayak Savarkar, the *de facto* leader of the London-group, fled to Paris in January 1910 to avoid arrest for his involvement in a murder in India as well as the Curzon Wyllie assassination, Chatto briefly rose to leadership of the India House group. When the Department of Criminal Intelligence (DCI) at Scotland Yard consequently stepped up their surveillance of the Indians in Britain, Chatto also fled for Paris in June 1910. Here he joined 'Madame' Bhikaji Cama, Lala Har Dayal and M.P.T. Acharya, among others, in the Paris Indian Society, and took on shared editorship of Cama's paper *Bande Mataram* as well as the Berlin-printed paper *Talvar*.¹⁴

The Indians in Paris had long associated with French Marxists such as Jean Jaurès, leader of the French Section of the Workers International (SFIO) and editor of *L'Humanité*, and Jean Longuet, Karl Marx's grandson and legal counsellor to the Indians, as well as a number of Russian revolutionaries, including Ilya Rubanovich, Mikhail Pavlovich and Charles Rappoport. Cama was a member of the SFIO, and Chatto joined the SFIO in September 1910. Reflecting on those years in 1934, when he had become a Communist, Chatto stated that 'we moved in the circles around *L'Humanité* (Jaurès, Longuet, etc.). It appears to me now very strange that Comrades Mikhail Pavlovich and Charles Rappoport with whom we often met never said a word to us about Lenin'.¹⁵

At the same time, however, according to Bhupendranath Dutta's recollections, Chatto and Acharya also moved within French anarchist networks.¹⁶ Dutta does not mention any names, but as Edward Briess testified in the bomb plot of Zurich trial in June 1919 (more on that below), Chatto was a member of the *L'Anarchie* group and a close friend of the Bonnot Gang, which included Jules Bonnot, Octave Garnier and Raymond Callemin, among others.¹⁷ The Bonnot Gang, as Richard Parry notes, was greatly inspired by the tactics of 'expropriation' – in short, bank robberies to finance revolutionary activities – carried out by Russian Maximalists in exile in Paris. This method of expropriation meant that the French Intelligence services (Sûreté) kept a close eye on the Maximalists, but also 'because they had links with French revolutionaries and Indian nationalists, whom they aided in the study and manufacture of pyrotechnics', according to Parry.¹⁸ In fact, in the autumn of 1907, the two Indian nationalists Hem Chandra Kanungo Das and Pandurang Mahadev Bapat approached Joseph 'Libertad' Albert, editor of *L'Anarchie*, and through him came into contact with the Russian Maximalist Nicholas Safranski, the unofficial leader of the Maximalists in Paris, according to the Sûreté, who taught them how to prepare bombs.¹⁹ Libertad died in November 1908 and Chatto would not have known him, but Das' and Bapat's connection may

have paved the way for Chatto's later association with *L'Anarchie*. In fact, Jeanne Morand, one of Libertad's lovers and main contributors to *L'Anarchie*, worked as a charwoman at 26 Rue Cadet, where Chatto and his friend Govind Amin lodged.²⁰ According to the DCI, Morand 'who has been the mistress of several well-known French anarchists, and was lately associated with the motor bandits' was an intimate acquaintance of Chatto, and even moved with him to 5 Avenue Carnot in February 1912.²¹ The extent of their friendship is unknown, but Morand most likely introduced Chatto to the French anarchists around *L'Anarchie*. That is to say, reading their friendship contrapuntally through other narratives acknowledges those less visible affinities that refuse to fit neatly into communities organised around ideology.

In his testimony, Briess also mentioned that Chatto knew Jean Grave, editor of *Les Temps Nouveaux*, and Maurice 'Mauricius' Vandamme, editor of *L'Anarchie* after Libertad's death.²² Grave, in particular, took an interest in the colonial question. In 'La Colonisation' (1912), he indicted the British for extracting capital from India, leaving famines and thousands of deaths in the wake, and for using Indians in capitalist wars against the Boers or the Germans.²³ However, perhaps through Chatto's influence, it was Aristide Pratelle who covered the so-called 'Savarkar affair' in *Les Temps Nouveaux*. Including clippings from Taraknath Das' New York-based paper *Free Hindustan*, Pratelle had already written extensively about British colonialism in India, and joined an international choir of socialists and anarchists, led by Guy Aldred's 'Savarkar Release Committee', in protesting against the controversial deportation of Savarkar to India in July 1910.²⁴ After the dispute over Savarkar's right to asylum in France ended up at the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in October 1910, the court eventually decided in favour of the British in February 1911, and Savarkar was sentenced to deportation for life in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal.²⁵ Pratelle protested the decision and called it a 'comedy' that exposed the cruelty of British colonialism in India.²⁶

The extent of Chatto's involvement with Grave and Pratelle is hard to determine from these extracts. However, by his own testimony, he was 'for a short while a member of the Socialist Party, and later member of an anarchist group and a republican society'.²⁷ As it happened, Chatto also assisted Edward Holton James with his republican magazine *The Liberator*, suggesting that he readily weaved together such revolutionary energies into 'an existentially urgent and ethically inventive enterprise' of metropolitan anti-colonialism culled from socialism, republicanism, and anarchism.²⁸ What is more, it is significant that it was through these friendships with the French anarchists that he met Luigi Bertoni, the Swiss-

based Italian editor of *Le Réveil/Il Risveglio*, which led to a fateful bomb- and assassination conspiracy during the First World War.

'DANGEROUS WORK' IN SWITZERLAND AND THE BALKANS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The activities of the Indian nationalists in Paris waned after the deportation of Savarkar, and Chatto briefly moved to Switzerland and Germany before ending up in the United States, where he remained until the spring of 1914.²⁹ In September 1914, Chatto and a group of Indian nationalists, including Abdul Hafiz, Chempakaraman Pillai and M.G. Prabhakar, formally set up the Indian Independence Committee (IIC) as a branch of the Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient under the German Foreign Office. Others such as Har Dayal, Acharya, Taraknath Das and Harish Chandra joined within a few months, and throughout the war the IIC engaged in German-backed operations in the United States, South East Asia, the Middle East, and Switzerland.

In the summer of 1915, Chatto and Hafiz contacted the well-known anarchist Luigi Bertoni and his comrade Arcangelo Cavadini with a proposal to smuggle arms and poison from Germany into Switzerland to be used against the Italian cavalry and for armed insurrections later on. At that time Switzerland was also a 'rallying ground, operational base and contact zone for various anti-colonial groups and individuals'.³⁰ The conspiracy was not discovered until May 1918, and the subsequent trial revealed further insights into Chatto's connections within the European anarchist milieu. According to testimony by Briess, a member of the Swiss-based International Pro-India Committee led by Pillai, Krishnavarma and the 'Anarchist' baronet Walter Strickland, (who turned out to be a British spy), Chatto and Hafiz also hatched a large-scale assassination plot against a number of kings, prime ministers and other prominent people in Europe.³¹ When they approached Bertoni in Geneva in May 1915, they claimed that they knew Errico Malatesta, but Chatto also later testified that he had been introduced to Bertoni through his connections with the French anarchists. Indeed, while the plot was largely orchestrated by Hafiz and Cavadini, it is clear that it was Chatto's connections with Bertoni that paved the way for it in the first place. In fact, Chatto confessed that he had met Bertoni in Geneva as he 'took an interest in all revolutionary movements'.³² What is more, according to Briess' testimony, Chatto knew Bertoni through Grave, and Bertoni subsequently introduced Chatto and Hafiz to Cavadini in June 1915. Bertoni also agreed to print Indian propaganda in his paper *Le Réveil/Il Risveglio*, and received 100 Francs for this, but denied any further

involvement with the Indians.³³ However, Bertoni subsequently wrote to Malatesta in London that he had been in touch with Hafiz and been offered a large sum of money for revolutionary activities. Malatesta warned Bertoni that they might be in German pay, and Bertoni seems to have backed away from the plot.³⁴ Nonetheless, Bertoni's willingness to engage in arms smuggling, performed perhaps in the spirit of revolt against monarchist and colonial forms of oppression, indicates the affinities for terrorism that existed between some factions of anarchists and revolutionary anti-colonial nationalists.

While he left the arms smuggling operation and the potential assassination of Italian Prime Minister Antonio Salandra to Hafiz, Chatto scoured the Balkans for terrorists willing to carry out the 'dangerous work' of the assassination conspiracy. In an almost apologetic report to the German Foreign Office on his failed mission, Chatto gave incriminating insights into this affair and his involvement with the European anarchist milieu. 'After having made arrangements about the Italian work with Bertoni and entrusted the technical side to Dr. Hafis', he starts, 'I proceeded straight to Constantinople to consult Mr. Har Dayal as to the best way of proceeding in the Balkans'.³⁵ With Abdul Wahid, a Young Turk, Chatto travelled to Bucharest and Sofia, where he associated with a motley group of Turkish nationalists, and eventually eked out a proposal to 'pay a considerable sum to anyone who succeeded in removing any of the three men in Bucharest whom I named'.³⁶ Except for Valentine Chirol, then stationed in Bucharest, and Gerald Fitzmaurice, the British legation to Sofia during the war, it is not known who the third man was.³⁷ Drawing a blank, he instead decided to contact the Romanian anarchist Panait Mușoiu, 'whose name had been given to me by Bertoni of Geneva (who said however that he could say nothing about him as he did not know him personally)'.³⁸ Having trouble finding Mușoiu, Chatto wandered into a picture shop to buy postcards one day and, striking up a conversation with the shopkeeper about the war, found out that she was Cornelia Ștefănescu, 'an anarchist and an intimate friend of the man I was looking for'.³⁹ Ștefănescu led Chatto to Mușoiu but after careful conversation found that 'it was impossible to get them to carry out any acts of violence'. Yet he gave them 1,000 Francs for their work and 'encouraged them to increase their literary activity by publishing anarchist brochures all over the country against war, and to attempt to preach among the peasants and stir up revolt'.⁴⁰ Chatto returned to Berlin shortly after, regretting that he had not stayed in contact with Ștefănescu as she would have been valuable 'as a messenger to the anarchists in Switzerland, France and Spain'.⁴¹

This mission failed. Perhaps misjudging the predominantly anti-militarist nature of international anarchism, as well as the denunciation of assassinations

as insurrectionist praxis among anarchists, the politics of Chatto's nationalist terrorism clashed with that of Mușoiu and Ștefanescu. But the story shows that Chatto clearly operated easily within the anarchist networks of Europe and formed friendships that enabled the planning of a large-scale assassination conspiracy.

By the early spring of 1917, with the German war effort waning and the Russian Revolution under way, a peace conference was proposed by a group of Dutch and Scandinavian socialists in the divided Second International to be held in Stockholm. In May 1917, in an attempt to distance themselves from the German-controlled IIC, Chatto and Acharya moved to Stockholm and, again, tied their efforts to the fate of international socialism. When they met the organising Dutch-Scandinavian Committee in July 1917, it soon became clear that their request to discuss the colonial question and Indian independence at the peace negotiations was denied by the European socialists.⁴² Trying their luck with the anti-militarist faction, Chatto and Acharya also attended the third Zimmerwald conference, held in Stockholm in September 1917, where they met Angelica Balabanoff and Konstantin Troyanovsky. This led to new contacts with Russian revolutionaries. In the autumn of 1917, according to the DCI, members of the IIC again contacted Bertoni, asking for assistance to 'start a new paper with the object of spreading anarchist ideas among educated Orientals'. As the Swiss Government had prohibited the publication of new periodicals during the war, the project never materialised. Still, the report stated that while Bertoni 'did not believe that anarchical ideals could be successfully spread in the orient, anarchical methods would be useful to Orientals in their struggle for liberty'.⁴³ In other words, the DCI's view was that the Indian anti-colonial revolutionaries were interested in propagating anarchist ideas even though Bertoni was doubtful about the success of this strategy and only recommended the adoption of 'anarchist' methods.

Whereas Acharya eventually moved away from Stockholm and attended the International Socialist Congress in Bern in February 1919, Chatto stayed in the city and associated with Swedish socialists. On a return trip from Berlin in March 1921 he was denied re-entry into Sweden because of his involvement in the Zurich bomb conspiracy. To muster support from the Swedish socialists, he wrote an open letter to the Swedish Prime Minister Oskar von Sydow in *Folkets Dagblad Politiken*, in which he denied his involvement in the affair. 'The only thing that was true', he wrote, 'was that I had had two conversations with Luigi Bertoni, the well known Italian communist, a man of spotless character, for whom I have the highest regard'.⁴⁴ The letter made no difference and Chatto was banned from entry to Sweden. He returned to Berlin.

'STILL IN HIS "ANARCHIST" PERIOD': BERLIN, 1921-1927

By the time Chatto returned to Berlin, he had become acquainted with Agnes Smedley, the American author and agitator, who had associated with Lala Lajpat Rai and Taraknath Das in the United States, and the two initiated a tumultuous relationship that lasted for five years.⁴⁵ He undertook several trips to Moscow to meet Lenin and other prominent Communists, but could not agree with M.N. Roy over the position of the Indian nationalists in relation to the Comintern. Whereas Roy wanted to subordinate the Indian national liberation struggle to the Comintern, Chatto was clearly wary of tying the fate of Indian independence to what he saw as another form of parliamentary socialism, albeit Bolshevik this time. In Weimar-era Berlin, 'a haven for anticolonial activists in Europe', he became a central figure among the around two hundred Indians in the city, and associated with well-known anarchists Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, whom he and Smedley had met in Moscow in 1921, as well as Rudolf Rocker and Armando Borghi.⁴⁶

In the early 1920s, post-Russian Revolution Berlin drew in numerous anarchists who were disillusioned with the events in Russia. In late December 1922, anarcho-syndicalist groups from across the world met in Berlin and formally established the IWMA with Rudolf Rocker, Augustin Souchy, and Alexander Schapiro as secretaries.⁴⁷ According to the annual report, a group of Indians also attended the weeklong meeting and, with the support of the IWMA, set up a committee with the aim of sending anarcho-syndicalist literature to India. While we know that Acharya attended the meeting, it is uncertain who the other Indians were, as there are no names mentioned in the report.⁴⁸ However, it is likely that Chatto was also among the attendees, because he soon associated with the German anarcho-syndicalists in the Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands (FAUD). In fact, in a letter to Goldman from early 1925, Smedley wrote that 'Chatto is as well as usual, but nervous and tired ... He translates for the *Syndikalist* [the organ of the FAUD] and has two students of English. The rest of the time he walks about the streets on errands for Indians who aren't worth two moments of his time. "Doing constructive work", he calls it'.⁴⁹ The extent of Chatto's involvement with the FAUD is hard to assess as no further records have been found. However, it seems that he aligned himself more with the anarchists than the communists at this point. What is more, according to private correspondence between Smedley's biographers Janice and Stephen MacKinnon and A.C.N. Nambiar, Chatto's brother-in-law, 'Smedley and Chatto were regularly attending study group meetings with Goldman, Berkman, and some of the leading anarchist thinkers in Europe, including the German

Rudolf Rocker and the Italian Armando Borghi'.⁵⁰ As further testimonies from Nambiar affirm, these study group meetings clearly had an impact on Chatto, but the extent of their friendship is unknown.

Having arrived in Berlin in April 1924, Nambiar stayed with Chatto and Smedley, and recalled that 'Chattopadhyaya was still in his "anarchist" period, but was already inclining towards Russia, and the Communist programme. His arguments appealed to me and won me over to his views, and I began to take a keen interest in the programmes of both anarchists and communists'.⁵¹ Like Chatto, Nambiar started giving English lessons to Germans and translated articles from German into English. 'Chattopadhyaya also gave several articles on anarchism which I used to scrutinize for him', Nambiar said. 'These articles interested me and gave me a different point of view; they were published in all languages in pamphlet form'. Staying with Chatto and Smedley until October 1924, Nambiar was impressed with Chatto's political ideas, and he [Nambiar] 'continued to study the anarchist theories, but eventually found a greater attraction in the Marxist doctrine'. What is more, Nambiar noted that, 'by 1924, Chattopadhyaya's group had largely broken up, but he himself still maintained contact with anti-Soviet anarchists on the Continent'.⁵² Charting a different path away from socialism, Nambiar later associated with Subhas Chandra Bose and the German Nazis, which suggests that anti-British, Indian nationalism took on different forms and also followed problematic trajectories.⁵³

Nambiar was not the only one who was impressed with Chatto's political ideas. Indeed, Chatto seems to have formed a friendship with Berkman – 'he has seen Chatto two or three times – for everybody sees Chatto', wrote Smedley to Goldman – and Berkman frequently came to their house for dinner. One evening, 'The minute he saw Chatto the two of them started their old stories', Smedley complained to Goldman, 'and because Bakar's brother [Ali Mirza] was present I had to stop them; at which Sasha [Berkman] remarked: "This atmosphere is too pure for me; I noticed it the minute I entered the room"'.⁵⁴ In other words, Smedley's letters to Goldman suggests a fairly close friendship between Chatto and Berkman, one that allowed for a radical form of internationalism, cross-fertilised by anti-imperialist and anarchist politics, which can be understood through Gandhi's 'politics of friendship'.⁵⁵

Although she was a close friend of Goldman and Berkman, Smedley was not an anarchist. 'My work is in India, and I am an out-and-out propagandist', she said. Moreover, assessing the Indian nationalist movement for Goldman, she wrote: '[it] is not an Anarchist movement, or even a Socialist one. It is, from the social viewpoint, reactionary and nationalistic'.⁵⁶ Similarly, in her autobiography,

Goldman recalled of Chatto that, '[he] was intellectual and witty, but he impressed me as a somewhat crafty individual. He called himself an anarchist, though it was evident that it was Hindu nationalism to which he had devoted himself entirely'.⁵⁷ Goldman had already associated with Har Dayal, Ram Chandra and the Ghadr Party in the United States, and she was generally sympathetic to the Indian revolutionaries, but also wary of reactionary elements of the nationalist movement.⁵⁸ However, cutting across such political divisions, Smedley also confessed to Goldman that 'I often think that he is of far more value than I am; everybody knows that – all of you Anarchists and revolutionaries, all of the Indians, everybody who knows us both'.⁵⁹ Certainly, Goldman found Chatto useful when she wanted to send her literature to India. It was at the suggestion of 'Mr. Chatto, Pedagogue', that Goldman submitted her manuscript 'My Disillusionment in Russia' to both Ganesh & Co. and G.A. Natesan & Co, in India. In her letters to the Indian publishers she stated that 'I believe my name is not unknown in India; certainly the Indians in America, Russia, and Germany know me well, and will, I believe, be interested in reading a critical analysis of the Bolshevik regime in their own language'.⁶⁰ Whether the publisher accepted her manuscript is unknown, but in 1925 Smedley assisted Goldman publish 'Heroic Women of the Revolution' in Welfare (Calcutta) (earning her 25 Rupees),⁶¹ and Chatto helped her publish an article on Dr Graf Wiser, a German eye specialist, in the Calcutta-based magazine *New Review*.⁶²

After Smedley and Chatto split up in 1925, and after both Goldman and Berkman had moved away from Berlin, contact between Chatto, Berkman and Goldman seems also to have ended. According to Nambiar, 'Chattopadhyaya continued his anarchist activities' for another two years. These 'were now restricted in scope' but 'lacked nothing in fervour'.⁶³

Without mentioning anarchism, Smedley wrote of Chatto in her book *Battle Hymn of China* that 'Virendranath turned more and more to the study of Marxism as a means of gaining independence for India'.⁶⁴ Indeed, by 1927 Chatto had become a Communist and now worked closely with Münzenberg to set up the LAI. This anti-imperialist organisation was tied to the Comintern, but when Hitler came into power in 1933 the LAI came to an abrupt end. At the same time, by the early 1930s, the Comintern had become increasingly suspicious of Chatto's anti-British, pro-German wartime activities, and he was summoned to Moscow in August 1931 to defend himself against these accusations.⁶⁵ The British intelligence service lost track of him for years, but rumours that Chatto had been arrested alongside a hundred other Indians in Moscow reached India in 1938. When the Government of India inquired, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs

replied that ‘no trace could be found of the missing man’.⁶⁶ Also responding to the rumours, Acharya remarked that ‘he could not be accused of being Trotskyist or Bucharinist “agent of Fascism in Russia”. In fact, he had no more nationalist leanings since he took to Communism’.⁶⁷ As it happened, Chatto had been caught up in the Stalinist purge of the 1930s, and he was executed on 2 September 1937.⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

Chatto’s peripatetic travels among anarchists in Europe come to life through a contrapuntal reading between the more prominent narratives of his friends, partners and enemies. Summing up Chatto’s ‘politics of friendship’, Acharya reflected after his arrest that

he was ever ready to help and guide not only Indian students abroad but men and women of all nationalities who sought his assistance. His knowledge of European politics is immense. He has come in intimate contact with diplomats and politicians of various countries. He also has firsthand information about the poorest strata in European society. Big and small men alike cherish his company and he impresses everybody as a friendly, bright and helpful gentleman.⁶⁹

Indeed, while Chatto was first and foremost an Indian revolutionary nationalist turned Communist, he also entered more radical networks among anarchists in Europe. In doing so, he straddled disparate revolutionary movements and negotiated Indian anti-colonialism through anarchism and communism. His peripatetic travels open a window onto the prefigurative politics of Indian anti-colonialism and its imaginary futures, its contact zones and shared affinities with other forms of radical internationalism, in both content and methods. It is precisely through the lens of ‘politics of friendship’ that the cross-fertilisation of ideas comes into clear sight.

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NOTES

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